DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 389 672 SP 036 298

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TITLE Evaluation of Multicultural Education's Understanding and Knowledge in Freshman Level Preservice Teachers.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Nashville, TN, November 8-11, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Freshmen; *Cultural Awareness; *Education Majors; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; High Schools; *Knowledge Level; *Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Required Courses; Secondary School Curriculum; State Legislation; *Student Attitudes; Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Eastern Kentucky University; *Kentucky; Kentucky Education Reform Act 1990; Preservice Teachers

ABSTRACT

One hundred forty-three Eastern Kentucky University college students majoring in education and enrolled in an introductory education course were surveyed to determine their understanding of and knowledge about multicultural education and to discern the extent to which these students appreciated and valued multicultural education. The study also intended to use this group as a control and compare it with a similar group in 1996, 5 years after the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), which was passed in 1990, and to use the group in a pre- and post-study in 1996. KERA recognizes the significance of diversity and includes diversity in the state's learner expectations. At the first class the subjects were asked to give a comprehensive definition of multicultural education by responding to a prompt "Multicultural education is..." These were then scored against the Kentucky State Board of Education's definition. Results suggested that multicultural education was addressed in the subjects' high school curriculum, though perhaps only to a limited degree. Compared to 11 percent of the subjects who did not know anything about multicultural education, 55 percent were aware of cultural differences. Another 4.2 percent had some understanding of multicultural education. Six subjects had benefited from their multicultural education to a degree where they accepted, respected, and valued it. (JB)

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"EVALUATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION'S UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE IN FRESHMEN LEVEL PRESERVICE TEACHERS"

by

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presented

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The Annual Meeting of the

Mid-South Educational Research Association

Nashville, TN.

November 8-11, 1994

SP036298

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Acknowledgement

The researcher acknowledges the contribution of Peggy Blanton, a middle grade school teacher in Scott County, Tammy Gabbard, Special Education Early Childhood Program Coordinator in Rockcastle County, and Margaret King, a high school teacher of the emotionally behaviorally disabled in Madison County, for their assistance in the development of the scoring rubric. Peggy Blanton and Tammy Gabbard also assisted the researcher with the scoring of the definitions written by the subjects. The researcher acknowledges with gratitude their assistance.

The demographic change occurring in the United States is now a well established fact. The color change in the U. S. population is contributed primarily by three factors: (a) failure to control illegal immigration, (b) relatively liberal immigration policies for the some foreign nationals, and, (c) the economic necessities. The legal and illegal immigration has resulted in a large Hispanic and Asian population, both of which are growing at a rapid rate. The predominantly caucasian population of the U. S. is gradually declining while the olive, yellow, brown, and black color populations are increasing in number.

A more important change is in the area of economics. The United States, which until very recently declared an economic boycott of countries that violated human rights, is now anxious to establish closer economic ties with the same countries. The economic interdependence is changing our world posture.

The demographic change and the economic shift, combined with the technological revolution, has changed the landscape of our country. A vast country which had enjoyed the security and privacy provided by the Atlantic on one side and the Pacific on the other and which had espoused the foreign policy of "isolationism" has found itself intertwined with foreign cultures and foreign economies.

The emerging "New Face of America" has challenged the education system. Since the publication of A Nation At Risk, report of the Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, many recommendations have been made to improve education standards and educational system in the country. Multicultural education is one of the goals of educational reform. The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) adopted multicultural education as a policy. It was also adopted by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), passed in 1992, also recognized the significance of diversity and included it in its learners' expectations.

To oversee the multicultural education component of the reform a Multicultural Education Branch has been established at the Kentucky Department of Education. This branch developed a definition of multicultural education which was approved by the Kentucky State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. This definition articulates the State's philosophy of multicultural education as follows:

> Multicultural education means interdisciplinary, cross-curricular education which prepares students to live, learn, and work together to achieve common goals in a culturally diverse world. It enables all students to be aware of and affirmed in their own cultural roots and allows all students to understand and value diversity, fostering appreciation, respect, and understanding for persons of different backgrounds. It prepares students to live fruitful lives in an increasingly global society with decreasing borders.

Purpose

This investigation was conducted to (1) determine the level of understanding and knowledge about multicultural education in freshmen level students, College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University in Fall 1992,

(2) discern the extent to which the students in this group were aware of multicultural education, understood it, appreciated, respected, valued, or encouraged it, (3) use this group as a control group and compare it with a similar group in 1996, five years after the implementation of KERA, for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of multicultural education in Kentucky schools, and (4) use this group for a pre-and-post study to be conducted in 1996 just prior to the graduation of this group and determine the effectiveness of multicultural education in the teacher education program at Eastern Kentucky University.

Methodology

The subjects were 143 students enrolled in EDO 100, a course required of all education majors in their first semester of the Freshmen year, in Fall 1992. At their first class meeting all students were given a sheet of paper with a prompt: Multicultural education is ... . The were asked to give a comprehensive definition of multicultural education. They were told that the definitions supplied by them would be used in a research study. Their anonymity was emphasized.

The definition of multicultural education adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education was analyzed by this researcher and three collaborators, all caucasians, veteran teachers in neighboring school districts, one each at the early childhood, middle school, and high school level. The four carefully reviewed the definition of multicultural education adopted by the State Board of Education and identified its different levels of depth and sophistication. Quality indicators in the state definition were given a numeric value. A scoring guide ranging from one to ten was considered. After considerable discussion, consensus was reached on a scoring guide ranging from one to six. The four scorers held a practice session in the application of the scoring guide and the assigning of points on a set of data collected of another group. Variances in scores among the four were discussed. Discrepancies were clarified. Remediation for discrepant readers was provided at this time. This practice session led to the finding of some blank and irrelevant responses. A score of zero was therefore added to the scoring guide, shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Another trial run was performed; this time to achieve consistency and establish inter-scorer reliability. After assuring reliability, three of the four scorers read each definition independently and individually and scored it according to the scoring guide developed for this purpose. The fourth scorer

was unable to score on account of prolonged illness. Scores of each of the three readers were recorded and summed. Three responses were eliminated from the data because a variance in scoring of one or less point was not obtained. Individual means were computed for the remaining 140 subjects. Mean, mode, and median scores for the group were computed.

Results

The data analysis performed yielded a range of scores from 0 to 5.3. The statistical procedures resulted in a group mean score of 1.1, median and mode score of 1.0. A complete descriptive statistics profile is shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

A ranked item analysis indicated that 45 subjects obtained an individual mean score of 1.0 which was the group median and mode score. A total of 16 subjects or 11% obtained a mean score of zero. A total of 35 subjects or 25% had individual mean scores of less than 1.0. A total of 77 subjects or 55% earned individual mean scores between 1.0 and 2.0. Six subjects or 4.2% had an individual mean score of 2.3. One subject or .007% of the sample earned a mean score of 3.3. A total of 4 subjects or .02% of the sample had a mean score between 4 and 5. And, one subject or .007% of the total population received a mean of 5.3, the highest score. The ranked item scores are presented in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

In other words 11% of this sample population had no concept of multicultural education. One quarter of the sample had less than an awareness level in multicultural education. About 55% of the students in the sample had an awareness of multicultural education. About 4.2% of the subjects had some knowledge and understanding of multicultural education. Another .02% were at the acceptance and respect level. And finally a .007 valued multicultural education.

Discussion

Results of this study support the fact that multicultural education is indeed addressed in the high school curriculum though only to a limited extent. Compared to 11% of the subjects who did not know anything about multicultural education 55% of the subjects were aware of cultural differences. Another 4.2% had some understanding of multicultural education. A few of the subjects had benefited from their multicultural education to a degree where they accepted, respected, and valued it.

Several explanations may be offered to explain the low scores of the subjects. It is possible that multicultural education is addressed only superficially in the high school curriculum and, therefore, a large majority of the subjects in the study fell at the awareness level.

The subjects were given a prompt which structured the task required of them. The structure may have inhibited some students from expressing their ideas. It is also possible that freshmen level students who were the subjects of this study did not understand the term multicultural education which was used in the prompt. The high school curriculum might have used a different terminology.

An overwhelming majority of preservice teachers are residents of Kentucky which is reputed to be a homogeneous state. For a majority of this population multicultural education is an unknown and unfamiliar concept. A majority of the high school graduates in southeastern Kentucky are not exposed to diversity, do not relate to it and perhaps do not approach it with any degree of seriousness. They do not internalize the information specially when the information does not relate with their immediate environment and needs.

A number of the preservice teachers at Eastern Kentucky University are from the south and southeast of Kentucky which is quite rural in nature. Multicultural education is not well received by these students. They do not accept it and some are openly opposed to cultural differences. Their inner resistance to multicultural education may have interfered with the attainment of higher levels of multicultural education.

The subjects were told that the definitions given by them would be used in a research study. Many students do not look at research in a serious manner. Therefore perhaps they did not want to take the time and did not approach the task seriously.

According to multicultural education experts, multicultural education is not a course or a set of courses. Instead, multicultural education is a process, an on going process. It is a climate which is perceived, felt, seen, lived in, and experienced by the learners. In this climate multicultural education is not taught; it occurs. Perhaps higher levels of multicultural education are attained when classroom instruction is combined with the right climate.

And last but not least, it is also possible that the scoring guide developed and used to analyze the data were not appropriate for the study. May be the different levels are not hierarchical in nature as they were used.

The data for the study were collected in Fall 1992. A large majority of the subjects had graduated from the high schools in Southeastern Kentucky in summer of 1992, only two years after the Kentucky Educational Reform Act had been implemented. It is hoped that the emphasis on multicultural education would increase as all of the elements of KERA have been fully implemented for a few years. A replication of this study and a comparison of the results with this one would be interesting to study the full impact of KERA.

Conclusions

According to the results of this study 11% of the total sample of this study did not know anything about multicultural education. More than half of the subjects (55%) had an awareness of multicultural education. Six of the

140 subjects in the sample had some knowledge and understanding about the research topic and only one subject in the sample was at the encouragement level. It can be concluded that according to the scoring rubric used in this study the freshmen level students in the College of Education in Fall 1992 had a negligible knowledge about multicultural education. A replication of this study in the near future would show the effectiveness of KERA vis-a-vis multicultural education.

Multicultural education is also a standard of the National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE). Given the present level of awareness regarding multicultural education in the preservice teachers at the College of Education a concerted effort is needed to bring the students to par in order to meet the NCATE criteria regarding multicultural education.

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Table 1 . Scoring Guide

0. The definition given is completely irrelevant or a blank sheet of paper has been turned in.

1. Demonstrates awareness of the existence of cultural differences/diversity.

2. Demonstrates some understanding and knowledge of cultural differences or cultural diversity.

3. An indication that the individual accepts, and/or appreciates cultural diversity.

4. An indication of respect, admiration, or regard for other cultures.

5. An indication that the writer values cultural diversity, sees some usefulness, significance or merit in it.

6. An indication that the author encourages, promotes, advances, or fosters cultural diversity.

Table 2- DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS PROFILE
N= 140

MEASURE	:	VALUE
MEAN	:	1.10357
MEDIAN	:	1
MODE (45 items)	:	1
RANGE	:	5.3
MINIMUM VALUE	:	0.0
MAXIMUM VALUE	:	5.3
SAMPLE VARIANCE	:	.85315
SAMPLE STD DEV	:	.92366
POP VAR	:	.84706
POP STD DEV	:	.92036
SKEWNESS	:	2.13946
kURTOSIS	:	6.27961

Table 3- RANKED ITEM DISPLAY
(Individual mean scores)
.....

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 (16)

.3 .3 .3 .3 .3 .3 .3 (7)

.6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6

.6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 .6 (28)

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 (45)

1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3 1.3
1.3 1.3 (13)

1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6 1.6
1.6 1.6 (12)

2 2 2 2 2 2 2 (7)

2.3 2.3 2.3 2.3 2.3 2.3 (6)

3.3 (1)

4.3 (1)

4.6 4.6 4.6 (3)

5.3 (1)